

Lessons Learned Record of Interview

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National Security Council

(b)(3), (b)(6), (B)(7)(C) Prior to that, it is my opinion that Afghanistan was a priority from 2001 to 2003, but then there was later a shifting focus to Iraq.. For Afghanistan, it was an economy of force issue, especially at the senior levels. Bandwidth was limited and there was a sense that Afghanistan was a series of one year wars and that one had to make do with what they have [in terms of resources]. (b)(3), (b)(6), (B)(7)(C) since 2007 Afghanistan was the backwater in terms of priority within not only the Department of Defense (DOD), but the interagency as well.

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PDD 56 and Civilian Planning Efforts

Most people post-Clinton administration did not know it. The directive came out of two experiences: Somalia and Haiti. In Somalia, the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing and in Haiti it was an attempt to apply the lessons learned from Somalia. PDD 56 was a mix of those two experiences. It was never fully applied under Clinton in Bosnia. [Richard] Clarke and others had rotated into new positions and people in the new positions have no buy-in. At the tail end [of the Clinton administration] PDD 56 was not being applied and there was only (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) but that person was sidelined. There really was no resourced planning capacity and culture at State Department.

S/CRS was a new entity and many wanted to kill it. S/CRS struggled for resources and relevance. Not only was USAID threatened by it but so was the whole interagency. There was a planning culture and a capability in the DOD but that was not matched even in a disproportionate way within the White House, State or USAID. The process means bringing people together. What happened was that people with no training, experience or interest came together and that was a challenge. There was no career path for S/CRS which made it difficult to get smart and capable people to into a field with no future. It was hard within State as the functional areas would see something 'new' and want to constrain or kill it. Civilian agencies were never resourced or prepared to plan on the civilian side.

People love to obsess over military plans and there are a lot of armchair advisors looking over the shoulders of four star [generals] and too much time is spent checking math on troop allocations. What about the political strategy or planning effective governance? We don't want to feed corruption so we need to sustain economic development plans with real capabilities at State and USAID. The plans need to match the level of fidelity on the military side. The civilian side is often late or flat footed on the side of civilian development. There are lots of smart people at the table but some don't have the experience or the training. With the civilian surge it was like pulling teeth to get 1,000 people deployed to the field. You had people at State and AID saying I can do this for a year but I can't sustain it. There's no capacity for a surge beyond contracting. There's no career path for people who chose operational assignments. You know you send these people out there but when they come back there's no career for them. The State Department doesn't know what to do with them and there's no capacity at AID it's mostly a contracting organization now. The military was desperate to have a development technician on the other side who could move things just beyond pacifying an area. But the capacity just wasn't there. When you look at how much we spent and what we got for it, it's mind boggling. We never really had an effort on the civilian side.

Task Force for Business Stability Operations (TFBSO)

I think TFBSO did interesting things in both Iraq and Afghanistan in bringing the private sector in, but there was nowhere to house it. It ended up in DOD because 1) no one else could do it, and 2) DOD have more flexible authorities and the protection of the military. It (TFBSO) does not belong in the DOD though, but DOD did use it in places like Herat. It found those who were willing to move investments to Mazar-e Sharif. It also was in areas with extractives and there was a need for companies to compete to mine, for example. The notion of TFBSO as a function is good, but if it was not in DOD, there was nowhere else for it to be housed. Inside State and at AID it's not like they were saying you're doing my job and I want to do it. Nobody want to do it at either place. TFBSO was in DOD because of a vacuum.

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USAID/STATE

USAID has innovative and effective parts, such as in food security and one good example in Tanzania. It was a multilateral partner force which worked to change many variables, including the tax structure, in order to increase investments. This is the model of the future and I talked to Raj (Rajiv Shah, former USAID Administrator 2010-2015), and he said that he doesn't have lots of people who can do this work. It is breaking the normal model and it is the most successful part of USAID. It suggests that USAID may need to change. USAID has to get the agency to realign around the most effective mission. They should look at how to pull those lessons learned from food security and use that to re-orient for the future.

In State, they all are political officers and are trained to observe and report, but at some point they must also do. Actually "doing" is not the emphasis of [State's] future and those that "do" have a limited career path. I want an operational cone in State.

DOD and Building the ANSF

As for DOD, there were some internal questions resolved too late and anomalies in the campaign plan like sending the U.S. Marines into Helmand. First, if counter insurgency (COIN) is an objective, we should not have put as many people into Helmand as we did. If the whole idea was the people were the center of gravity then it didn't make sense because there are that many people there. But, the Marines like to work within a uniform command up to the general level; Marines want Marine air support and Marine logistics. They don't play well with other branches. Gates, as noted in his book, regrets not taking on the command and control issues earlier on and pushing for a different decision there. The second issue was how we approached building the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The military likes to build smaller versions of itself instead of what is sustainable in the Afghanistan context. For example, we should have built more earthen ANSF buildings which would have been good enough and sustainable, but did they need the western style buildings with all the amenities? We needed to build an ANSF that was sustainable. We repeat this mistake often.

Putting money into infrastructure means that it is taken away from equipping of forces. The people involved in this [building an army] have never built a foreign army before for the most part. This points to the division between Special Forces (SOF) and the conventional army. As for SOF, all they do is train and build. SOF has a better idea of what is sustainable but on a smaller scale. **"We are guilty of building what we know how to build, not what was sustainable."**

[Building] Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) involved putting together an organization of individuals, not units or existing organizations. A commander would be assigned and then the commander would pull people he knew on a personal level. It was not until [Admiral Mike] Mullen, when there was a lot of top cover to build CSTC-A. It was slow and late. It was hard to get people and those we got may not have been the most sought after people. With Mullen, people started twisting arms to get the right people, and we had to do this [arm twisting] every year. We could not easily send people based on prior experience because the MOS was the only detail logged in the HR system. There was no way to find people with the right type of experience besides personal networks and word of mouth. It is nuts.

Personnel and Staffing

The problem is that there is no field in the HR database to track anything past a person's MOS. We needed operational experience in the field. The Army and Marines as of 2012 did not have this capacity. On the civilian side, DOD tried to do the civilian surge by word of mouth. This is how MODA/CEW worked too. **"We would present resumes to State and USAID and they would continually tell us that they were not the right people."** It was ad hoc and hard. We need to capture the skill set of the full interagency."

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Borrowing people was hard because many agencies did not have the ability to backfill the talent. There were also the details about storage and insurance – none of it was automatic and was handled on a case by case basis. Other people has personal reasons not to do go out or would not want to do it for more than one year. Some avoided it because of the cumbersome nature of the deployment process. For example, if you deployed and no longer were covered for life insurance or when you came back you may not have a job. Young people seemed to volunteer multiple times and many saw it as the highlight of their career. I don't know, maybe they are just less risk averse. The system is just not setup for the interagency.

“The Fix: We need a package of standard operating procedures and authorities for rapid deployment of civilians that has the administrative pieces worked out. We need an incentive structure that factors in how a deployment affects their careers; a career reintegration program. We need to change the way we find people. The system needs to track qualified individuals as opposed to recruiting just as problems arise. All this needs to be done on the interagency scale.”

Clearances

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) and having to go through multiple clearance process is crazy. We need a single clearance process. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)
The resource suck is crazy. Each agency thinks their process is best but all actually contract out the process.

The Surge

Iraq was sucking resources and there was a request for a strategic review to be conducted on Afghanistan by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The request for a surge was drafted and sent to the Bush administration but they held off on the deployment and just sat on the request. The request added that the surge was necessary or we would lose territory and that without the surge security for the election would deteriorate. So when Obama became president, the military pushed the idea and Obama green lighted it in order not to lose the ground we already won. In [Stanely] McChrystal's book, he justified 30,000 U.S. and 10,000 NATO troops. This document was leaked and created tension with [Robert] Gates.

Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)

The QDR was introduced by Congress and used by administrations to articulate strategy and to align resources. They were also used if there was a dramatic shift in the security environment. **“The problem with the QDR is that they were incredibly bureaucratic and took a lot of manpower/days/years to produce and did not have a lot of impact on decision making.”** In comparison the 2012 Strategic Guidance was much more useful. It was a top down effort not a big bureaucratic effort. It involved many multi-hour sessions at the White House and was leader-driven discussion at the four star [general] level. It was a discussion on to accept and manage risk. The document also included a front-ended budget process and got a lot of traction because the four star principles were in the room with the president. They were heard and felt partnership and buy-in to the process. Future QDRs should look like the 2012 Strategic Guidance.